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Heroes or Victims? The Role and Antifascist Culture of Jews in the German Democratic Republic

*Eric Brothers**

At this historic juncture in German history, an attempt at documenting the Jewish contribution to the former German Democratic Republic must be made. What are we to make of this fiercely anti-Zionist state that refused to take any responsibility for the crimes of the Third Reich? Should the GDR be viewed as the "heavy" because it never paid any reparations to Jewish victims of the Nazis? How have Jews contributed to this "democratic dictatorship of workers and farmers", which billed itself during its almost 41 years of existence as the "first socialist state on German soil"?

The German Communist party, which included a significant number of Jews, was decimated by Nazi terror after the Reichstag fire, the high fatality rate suffered by members of the Thaelmann Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, and the Holocaust. After the war, most of the surviving Communist Jews returned to what was then the occupied Soviet sector of Germany in order to help rebuild their country. This new nation, incorporated as the German Democratic Republic on October 7, 1949, was founded on the political and moral basis of Communism and anti-fascism. The opposition Social Democratic party was neutralized by its being forcibly merged with the Communist party in 1946 to form the Socialist Unity Party (SED), commonly called the Communist party, which changed its focus and name to the Party of Democratic Socialism in

order to gear up for the GDR's first truly free elections on March 18, 1990.

Many Communist Jews distanced themselves from their Jewish roots, due both to personal conviction and political expediency. One of these people was Hermann Axen, who joined the Communist Youth League of Germany in 1932, and worked in the anti-fascist resistance after 1933. Arrested in 1935, he was sentenced to three years of penal servitude at Zwickau prison. After being released he emigrated to France. This was quite rare, for most Communists of Jewish heritage were sent directly to concentration camps after completing their prison sentences. Unfortunately, Axen was interned in France as an "enemy alien" after the war began and was later handed over to the Germans. Relocated to Auschwitz, he worked in the Javischovitz coal mines and in 1944 was sent to Buchenwald, where he was later liberated by the Americans. Shortly thereafter Axen became the chairman of the State Youth Committee of Saxony in 1945. Erich Honecker, the man in charge of organizing the youth of the Soviet sector at the time, appointed Axen to the Central Youth Committee in Berlin, where he was in charge of the organization and cadre division. In essence he became Honecker's second in command, and was responsible for forging the Free German Youth (FDJ), the massive youth organization of the GDR that was strongly aligned with the Communists. He rose in the party ranks along with Honecker, and ended his career as the greatly feared Secretary of the East German Politburo and the GDR's Foreign Minister. Axen was swept out of power along with his mentor, thrown out of the party, and indicted for criminal acts committed during the Honecker regime (1971–1989).

Another Communist Jew who was active in the initial formation of the GDR was Kurt Goldstein, an Auschwitz survivor who later became the head of the GDR Committee of Former Inmates of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Goldstein was under consideration to head up the FDJ in West Germany. He was known to be a top-caliber functionary, but Erich Honecker fought against his appointment mostly because he was a Jew. Honecker wanted someone who would inspire "enthusiastic loyalty in all strata of youth". Honecker said, "Kurt Goldstein is a Jew. His name sounds Jewish, and I'm sorry to say that he also looks very Jewish. This would certainly give

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rise to resentment in some quarters and might force the FDJ into isolation.” This view may appear to be anti-Semitic, but Heinz Lippman, Honecker’s deputy in the FDJ and author of *Honecker and the New Politics of Europe* (1971), attributes this solely to Honecker’s conception of what a Communist first secretary for youth should look like: tall, blond, and blue-eyed. A Jew could work as a second or third secretary, but not a first secretary when dealing with German youth. The example of Hermann Axen and many other Communist Jews attaining important positions in the GDR should allay any misconception of Honecker being an anti-Semite. However, this example spells out a difficulty encountered by a number of Communist Jews: they didn’t “look” the part.

The left-wing German anti-fascist resistance movement provided the moral basis for the existence of the GDR, and was integrated into the political, historical, and social fibre of the nation. At the forefront of the resistance is the Herbert Baum group of Berlin, the largest Jewish underground organization in Germany during the Third Reich. All group members were not Jewish and Communist, but many were, and in the GDR it was considered a Communist anti-fascist group. Dr Margot Pikarski, an influential East German historian, has been researching and writing on the Baum group since 1963, when, as a newly registered member of the SED, she came across documents at the Institute for Marxism and Leninism in East Berlin, where she was one of the top archivists. The Jewish origin of the group is documented in Pikarski’s books and pamphlets and books by many other East German historians and journalists.

The state sponsored GDR Anti-Fascist Resistance Committee (*Antifa*) was a veterans organization of former resistance fighters, which included a relatively high proportion of Jewish members. They didn’t want people to forget what happened during the Third Reich – called the “time of Fascism” in the GDR – and had members visit schools, institutions, and worksites to discuss what life was like then and share their experiences in the resistance. Over 70 schools, workplaces, and other organizations in the GDR carried the name of Herbert Baum and his comrades. In order to be named for a resistance fighter, the organization had to have a good track record, i.e. excellent student test results, high-

quality work, or recognized excellence in a certain field. An application was submitted to *Antifa* for review and consideration. If a school wished to be named for Herbert Baum, former members of the Baum group met with students there. He or she would talk about their experiences during the Third Reich. This helped inspire people to create a fitting memorial to the resistance. Under the supervision of a teacher, the students researched the individual and the group and wrote papers and created an exhibit called a *Traditionskabinett*. The main thrusts of these exhibits was Communism, anti-fascism, and the desire for peace. After this process, which took about a year, was completed, and *Antifa* granted the name to an organization, a solemn ceremony with former resistance fighters in attendance was held. This was a cultural tradition in the GDR, which instilled patriotism and a sense of working together to reach common goals.

Two examples of *Traditionskabinetts* honoring the resistance in former East Berlin are the Herbert Baum *Oberschule*, a school that went through the tenth grade; and the Herbert Baum *Betriebsberufsschule Ingenieurhochbau* (IHB), a school for apprentices in the construction engineering industry. The idea for applying for the name “Herbert Baum” at the *Oberschule* came from a teacher who was a member of the Herbert Baum Battalion in the National People’s Army. The school set aside a large classroom for the *Traditionskabinett*, and featured a few large exhibits on the Baum group. One of them has photos of all group members who were executed by the Nazis. On a counter were book reports written about the group by students. The IHB had a stone monument of Herbert Baum at its entrance which was carved by students. In this *Traditionskabinett* was a wall dedicated to Baum: an oil painting of him was accompanied by a list of important events in his life. In a glass case one found an impressive collection of documents and copies of original flyers from the Communist underground movement. Each incoming class in both schools was given a detailed explanation of the exhibits by students who worked on previous ones. These new students created their own exhibits with guidance from teachers and older students. This helped young people learn the truth about what happened during “the time of fascism”.¹

The largest Jewish cemetery in Germany is located in eastern Berlin's Weissensee district, a dilapidated neighborhood with a true old world feel. The quiet street leading to the cemetery was renamed Herbert-Baum-Strasse in honour of the fallen Jewish-Communist resistance fighter. Walking onto the cemetery grounds, one passes a monument erected by the East Berlin Jewish community honouring their brothers and sisters slaughtered during the Holocaust. After passing through the entrance, an eerily serene and beautiful remnant of pre-war Berlin unfolds. A relatively "new" cemetery, Weissensee was founded in 1880 and is the final resting place for over 110,000 Berlin Jews. Graves and huge mausoleums carry inscriptions in German, Hebrew, or both languages. The Nazis never touched Weissensee, but their mark is noticeable none the less. A number of graves state a person's place of death as "Auschwitz".

The grave of Herbert Baum is located near the entrance, and is always covered with flowers and stones. Walking down well-tended dirt paths, visitors are shaded by tall, old trees – a rarity in Berlin – that bring a chill to the air even on a hot summer's day. Many graves are overgrown with thick bushes and some have beautiful wild flowers sprouting upwards. Some tombstones and mausoleums have been split in half by trees stretching up towards the heavens. The entire cemetery seems engaged in a valiant struggle to return to nature.

Other signs of Jewish culture and history in former East Berlin are found in two synagogues. The one on Ryke Strasse, renamed the "Temple of Peace" after the East German government renovated it in the 1970s, is the only operational synagogue in eastern Berlin. It was not destroyed during the *Kristallnacht* pogrom due to its location in a courtyard next to "Aryan" apartment buildings. However, it was used as a vegetable warehouse during the war. The one on Oranienburger Strasse, in the downtown Mitte district, was gutted with fire on *Kristallnacht* and left by the GDR government as a reminder of what the Nazis did to Berlin Jewry. Bushes and trees grow out of where the impressive dome once sat.

The Oranienburger Strasse synagogue was the site of a special ceremony on November 9, 1988 – fifty years to the day it was destroyed. Erich Honecker and other government officials

dedicated the renovation of this war-ravaged monument, which will eventually be a Jewish cultural center, museum, archive, and Judaica library. The reconstruction costs will be paid for by the German government and American Jewish fundraising organizations. The committee working on this project is composed of both religious and Communist Jews. One of the Communists was Herbert Gruenstein, a member of the Ernst Thaelman Brigade during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939); he fled to the Soviet Union after the fall of the Spanish Republic to Franco's Fascist forces: Gruenstein was the leader of the East Berlin chapter of *Antifa*.

Most of the surviving Jewish Communists returned to Germany after the war. However, native Berliner Gunter Prager, a former member of the Baum group, returned to East Berlin only in 1960. He had been living in Austria but decided to return to his native city. Upon arriving in Berlin, Prager became a teacher in a trade apprenticeship school. He also became a member of *Antifa* (only in 1984) along with his few surviving friends from the Baum group.

Prager stated that in the GDR there was no special focus on teaching young people about the Holocaust; students were taught what the Nazis did to everyone, including Jews. Students visited concentration camp sites to pay their respects to the "victims of Fascism". Prager felt that anti-Semitism was successfully wiped out in the GDR, and had always felt safe as a Jew there due to the strict laws against racism or prejudice of any kind. He repeated many times, "You can't sleep", regarding the fight against anti-Semitism and racism. He felt that anti-Semitism is always where Fascism is found. He is a fighter from way back and is not about to stop now.²

Prager was a recipient of a programme for survivors that existed in East Germany called the Committee of Victims of Fascism for those people living in the GDR who suffered under the Nazi regime: Jews, gypsies, resistance fighters, and other persecuted people.

The benefits included: lowering the retirement age by five years, to 55 for women and 60 for men and an additional "honour pension", which gives them a retirement income of about 30 per cent above the average wage.

Resistance fighters were given a "Fighter against Fascism" medal which entitled them to an

additional annual payment of 500 marks. All other benefits were the same for victims, whether they were active in the resistance or not. They all received preferential health treatment, additional paid vacation days, and special consideration for visits to health resorts. The children of victims received a special stipend from the age of 16 until they completed their education and, when they married, received preferential apartments so their parents did not have to live in crowded conditions. Victims could also ride on public transport with a guest free of charge and received many other benefits. Prager insists that concentration camp survivors, resistance fighters, and other victims of Nazism were treated with dignity and respect in the GDR.

Despite the respect accorded Jewish anti-fascist resistance fighters, anti-Semitism has reared its ugly head in the former GDR. This happened since the opening of the Berlin Wall and the unstoppable march towards German reunification. While anti-fascism was the moral basis of the Honecker regime, routing anti-Jewish feelings from the citizenry was never dealt with head on by the government. This was never part of the GDR de-Nazification programme. As the East German author Hermann Kant stated, "You cannot understand my party [the SED] without understanding its anti-fascist component. Without it, the party would be as if one of its legs were broken off". Anti-Semitism and racism was made illegal and punishable with strict laws, and the GDR, unlike Poland and Czechoslovakia, always kept its anti-Zionism "in bounds", according to Kant. An example of the strict laws is when 222 gravestones and markers in the Orthodox cemetery on East Berlin's Shoenhauser Allee were vandalized by at least five "Rowdys", according to the *Berliner Zeitung* of July 7, 1988. The trial ended with the guilty parties receiving sentences from 2½ years to 6½ years.

One of the major reasons for the current situation could be due to the fact that East Germany never accepted any guilt for the crimes of the Nazis regime against the Jews. They had always maintained (until after the fall of Honecker) that the GDR was founded by Communists who themselves were the first victims of National Socialism. How could victims of Nazism accept guilt for their enemy's crimes? But many citizens of East Germany were indeed members of the Nazi party and thus the ones who

carried out or believed in Hitler's anti-Jewish measures; in essence they were absolved of any guilt along with their Communist leaders and fellow citizens.

In February of 1990, East German Prime Minister Hans Modrow said the government acknowledged "the responsibility of the entire German people for the past" and was ready to "provide material support" for those Jews who suffered during the Holocaust. Modrow also dealt with the issue of the fear of the rise of anti-Semitism and nationalism in the GDR: "The German Democratic Republic stands unalterably by its duty to do everything against racism, Nazism, anti-Semitism, and hatred among peoples, so that in the future war and Fascism will never again start from German soil, but only peace and understanding among people".

After attending school and university in the Soviet Union, Markus "Misha" Wolf, the son of the Communist writer Friedrich Wolf, arrived in Berlin in 1946 wearing the uniform of an officer of the Red Army. A Communist Jew, Wolf was assigned to work with Erich Honecker in the *Komsomol* group in the political division of the Soviet Military Administration. He later became the GDR's master spy for thirty-three years, and retired four years ago.

Even before the fall of Honecker, Wolf developed a reputation as a reformer. It was during his time in the Soviet Union that he befriended people who rose to important posts in Mikhail Gorbachev's government, including former KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchkov.³ This interaction with Soviet officials enabled him to see the inner workings of events there, and in turn he briefed his friends on the developing situation in the GDR. Wolf said in November, 1989, "A year ago I was telling the Russians we could still turn things around here in respect to *glasnost* and *perestroika*".

Wolf made his foray into East German reform in 1988 with the publication of his book, *The Troika*. It covered three families that lived together in Moscow before the war: that of Wolf's father; the American historian Louis Fisher; and Wilhelm Bloch, who fought in the German army and later became a West German businessman. But what caused the biggest stir was that the book was extremely critical of Stalinism, which was still taboo in 1989. It also criticized the GDR policies of the 1970s, which

saw many artists purged. Wolf became an instant celebrity, and, with the growing revolutionary movement, a major player in the move towards East German reform. The former spymaster was quite proud of the manner in which the revolution developed and grew. "Gorbachev's was a revolution from above", he said. "Ours was from below. To those who know the history of Germany, this is a phenomenon, that the people have been so wise, so reserved."⁴

After Hungary opened up its border with Austria in the summer of 1989, thousands of East Germans "voted with their feet" as they headed for West Germany. They also went to other countries in order to flee the GDR. Massive demonstrations throughout the country started up after the 40th anniversary celebration in East Berlin on October 7. These two over-growing movements swept Erich Honecker and his Politburo out of office, and his deputy, Egon Krenz, assumed the role of head of state and leader of the Communists. It was Krenz who opened all borders – including the Berlin Wall – between the two Germanys for all GDR citizens on November 9, 1989. But despite his radical steps to attempt keeping people in East Germany, he too was thrown out of office; he was tainted by his years of association with Honecker. Now a new leader of the Communist Party had to be chosen.

On December 9, 1989, after an all-night debate at party headquarters, a new leader emerged. Gregor Gysi, the son of a Jewish Communist resistance fighter, was declared party chairman with an impressive 95.3 per cent of the votes cast. Gysi's intent was to salvage a future opposition role for the former Communists – now the Party of Democratic Socialism – in a truly democratic Germany. "We have to make a radical break with the Stalinist past", Gysi stated in 1989, "We want to use both the traditions of social democracy and Communism. The big weakness of social democracy was that it waged half-hearted revolutions, but it knew a lot about reform. The Communist made revolutions, but didn't know much about reform."

Gysi discussed his upbringing: "My father and my mother were persecuted by the Nazi regime as anti-fascists, so I was raised in a very definite anti-fascist sense, with an orientation to the party, which led to my joining as . . . a full member at 19, in 1967." Gysi's Jewish roots,

which include a grandfather on his mother's side, have led him "to take an interest in the life of the Jewish community, but I'm not a believer, I'm not a practicing Jew or a member of the community, but I have always supported it."⁵

It would be interesting to consider the Jewish anti-fascist view of the explosive events that led to the opening of the Berlin wall and thus the collapse of the GDR and beyond. In a series of letters from Gunter Prager in East Berlin, we get an insider's view of history in the making.

In a letter dated November 8, 1989, the day before the Berlin wall opened up, Prager states that he saw Erich Honecker for the last time in public during the 40th anniversary celebration on October 7. Prager took part in the mass demonstration with Soviet President Gorbachev. He discussed his view of the mass protest demonstrations throughout his country: "The demonstrations at the *same time* in many places of our country were well organized under the direction of the TV and radio of the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany] and also other stations like 'Voice of America'. Their reporters and cameras were always on the spot where something happened. On the other hand the slogans and demands, known to us through the channels of the TV stations of the FRG, were and still are of course, partly or fully justified."

He mentions the whirlwind of events sweeping through Eastern Europe: ". . . the events in our neighboring countries ([Soviet Union], Poland, Hungary) and now in our own country do not go past me without leaving a trace. In the family, among friends and neighbours, with comrades and others we discuss all the problems. We see it all day and . . . night on the TV, hear it on the radio and read it in the paper . . . the 'New Forum' plays its part. Their part in our society is in discussion . . . I am an optimist." He also wrote about the return movement from West Germany, which was completely ignored in the Western press, and the fact that thousands of Italian and Polish families were applying to immigrate to the GDR.

He wrote about his former leader: "Erich Honecker and the others have done excellent work as antifascists and in building up the republic . . . But . . . it is also a problem of generations. With 70 years and more, one has not the elasticity of a younger [person]. He has of course the experience. But it is not enough.

Therefore some of the troubles we have now.”

“I wanted to . . . give you some new information as I see the situation in our country, but it changes daily. So it is hard to give an account.” Thus begins a letter from Prager dated February 27, 1990. He discussed the unstoppable march towards reunification, which Prager called a “taking over” and compared to the *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938. He was appalled by the onslaught of West Germans in preparing for the GDR elections. “Never known in history before [is] the interference of officials, politicians and others like Kohl, Genschler . . . in a still sovereign country, [to] give promises, give a lot of money [and] pay their agents here . . .” Prager felt that “the opening of the border was a necessary step”. But he wrote about problems that didn’t exist before, including the “import of Fascist symbols and propaganda material”.

His view of Honecker changed drastically with the revelations about his corrupt actions: “Honecker and his friends . . . didn’t act like real socialists. Therefore they are traitors . . . They are traitors to the party, to socialism, to the country which millions of honest people and comrades with their sweat built up . . . I agree to throw Honecker and the others out of the party.”

The reaction of *Antifa* to neo-Nazi activities was quite dramatic: “In the first weeks of the year we had demonstrations (up to 250,000 people) to condemn neofascism. Many organizations and groups (many young people) are gathering to do something against it . . . a ‘League of Antifascists’ has been established . . .” The far-right Republikaner party was a cause of great concern: “Neo-Nazi boss Schoenhuber has mobilized his forces. Tons of Nazi leaflets are coming over the border. Much money is spent to mobilize their supporters in our country. In Leipzig and other towns slogans (also anti-Semitic) are on the agenda . . . many old people are in despair. But we are ready to resist.” Prager stated that when he moved from Austria to the GDR, he wanted to return home and “work as an antifascist”. He never would have moved to the FRG. “Old people who have never forgotten Auschwitz and other [concentration camps] fear the future. ‘Do the Nazis come back again?’ they ask us.”

Vera Ansbach, an East Berlin Jew and widow of Baum group veteran Herbert Ansbach, reports events in a letter dated February 25, 1990. She

discusses her party, the former Communists – now the Party of Democratic Socialism – which is led by Gregor Gysi: “My own party, now with a new programme, statutes, leading people, cleaned or in the process of cleaning itself from Stalinist views and methods, much diminished in membership (as it no longer helps in a career but, on the contrary, needs a lot of courage and idealism to be a member) is much discriminated. In demonstrations we can see slogans calling even to hang our members! This is not the general trend, but in any case it exists and no one is doing anything against it.”

Mrs Ansbach states: “What I am suffering from most is the shame that members of my own party and comrades of the antifascist fight have let us down so badly. Of course, in a way we are all guilty for not having them stopped. It is no excuse that we did not know or could not act.”

Gunter Prager’s letter of December 17, 1990 describes more difficulties in the now former GDR. “No social security any more, unemployment and a rapid and high increase of all expenses. Everything we liked and found good has to be abolished. Everything connected with the GDR must disappear.

He described the changes in *Antifa*. It was reorganized and closely connected with the “League of Antifascists”. *Antifa* held numerous rallies and memorials, including one on November 9 1990, the 52nd anniversary of *Kristallnacht*; ironically the same date marks the opening of the Berlin wall. “[*Antifa*] has to defend the interests of the victims as the new rulers are already cutting down the rights we had before. The movement of the antifascists has to learn to exist without support of the state and other institutions . . . now we have to exist on the contributions of our members and sponsors. Our friends from the Herbert Baum group are still active. But we are getting older. A certain weariness has grown, too.” But as Prager said in an earlier letter, he is an optimist.⁶

Perhaps hope for the future lies in the writing of the distant past. One of the first plays to be produced in the Soviet sector of Berlin amidst the rubble of 1945 was “Nathan the Wise”, which was written by Gottfried Lessing in 1779. The play is about a German rabbi who preaches tolerance in a nation that has little experience with it. In December of 1989 a radio programme in the GDR dealt specifically with Lessing’s work. The

commentator, Dr Ottfried Arnold, described how deeply moved he was when reading the Lessing drama shortly after World War II. He asked his audience: "How could we have permitted so much intolerance to come about? My 'Nathan' experience never left me, but I repressed it. It is time now to talk about morality, about means and ends, and above all about tolerance."

Notes

1. The Berlin education establishment has taken away the name "Herbert Baum" from both schools. According to Gunter Prager, "... the names of nearly all schools disappeared over night".
2. These statements were made to the author in July, 1988 – well before the reunification of Germany.
3. Kryuchkov was one of the leaders of the failed coup in the former USSR in August of 1991. He is currently in prison awaiting trial on charges of treason.
4. Wolf fled to the former Soviet Union after the reunification of Germany. Despite his role as a reformer, his thirty-three years as the GDR's master spy put him at risk of arrest and a trial. After the failed coup, he realized that the new government would send him back to Germany. Wolf applied for political asylum in Austria, but he was rejected. He then returned to Germany and was promptly arrested. It is not known at this time whether or not he will stand trial.
5. Gysi is currently an elected representative of the Party of Democratic Socialism in the German parliament in Bonn.
6. Prager has broken completely with his Communist past; he now considers himself to be solely an antifascist.

The Burden of the Holocaust 1945–1989: Horror, Mourning, Attempted New Beginning

*Dietrich Goldschmidt**

Everyone who has been touched by the Holocaust – and what decent person has not? – has his own personal quarrel with God, with men and with himself.¹

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Prehistory: The End of German Jewry

The close of World War II led to a re-shaping of Europe. Formerly inconceivable crimes were committed by the Germans in the name of their people and their state, from 1933 to 1945, against their adversaries both at home and in neighbouring European countries. The Holocaust disaster, inflicted upon millions of people, weighs heavily upon several generations of Germans as an oppressive shadow in the two German successor states and on their citizens. Austria is no less burdened. The most brutally persecuted were the Jews. The sacrifices to which they were subjected are immeasurably vast. Their existence was to be totally extinguished. I propose here to delineate their subsequent fate in so far as it resulted from the catastrophic events of that time of terror and from the actions and attitudes of others toward them, especially from the conduct of the Federal Republic and its people.

Hitler had announced quite early his programme for the expulsion or rather the wholesale murder of the Jews in *Mein Kampf* (1923/1926). The seriousness of its radical nature remained widely unrecognized. Yet from January 30, 1933 on Hitler and his hundreds of thousands of followers, supported by millions of voters, succeeded with unimaginable speed and consistency in carrying out the programme in Germany. The first victims were the German Jews and large numbers of those Germans who were of Jewish or partly Jewish descent. It began with the boycott of Jewish business on April 1, 1933 and the promulgation a few days later of the Law for Restructuring the German Bureaucracy (the so-called *Berufsbeamtengesetz*), followed by the discriminating "Nürnberg" laws of September 1935 and the so-called National Crystal Night (*Reichskristallnacht*) of November 1938 – accompanied by innumerable "Measures" (*Maßnahmen*), like public discrimination, gradual exclusion from public service and from the professions, imprisonment in concentration camps, property confiscation, expulsion of hundreds of thousands to foreign countries; the road for the remaining Jews led finally to the death camps: Auschwitz and other killing plants.

After the conquest of almost all neighbouring European countries, millions of their Jews suffered the same fate. Many Germans of Jewish descent who were baptized or who had become